3.0 FORT RICHARDSON

Introduction

A number of historic properties are located on or near Army lands in Alaska; many of these properties are historic structures and buildings pre-dating or associated with World War II and Cold War era Army activities (see e.g. Hollinger 2001; Shaw 2000). Previous archaeological work at Fort Richardson includes several projects since the late 1970s (Hedman et al. 2003; Reynolds 1996; Shaw 2000; Sheppard et al. 2001; Steele 1979, 1980; Veltre 1978). Of these surveys, only Hedman et al., Steele, Reynolds and Shaw reported the discovery of archaeological sites. Steele's 1980 review identified four sites, all of which contained 20th century cabins associated with early homesteading in the area (ANC-00263, ANC-00264, ANC-00265 and ANC-00268; Steele 1980). Reynolds recorded the multi-component historic site ANC-00822 near Ship Creek, in the vicinity of Moose Run Driving Range. Shaw reported approximately 20 sites, the majority of which comprised military related mounds, foxholes and bunkers. Shaw's work identified one prehistoric site, ANC-01175, consisting of a single lithic flake and a small lithic spall. This site is located within a cleared area along the edge of the Elmendorf Moraine (Shaw 2000). Shaw's and Steele's work indicate that moraine features throughout Fort Richardson, oriented roughly northeast-southwest, represent relatively high probability areas for identifying archaeological sites on Fort Richardson.

Additionally, Hedman et al. (2003) relocated an historic era fish camp site near Whitney Point which was used by the Eklutna Industrial (Vocational) School from 1924 to 1946 (the site was originally identified during a 1994 collaborative study conducted by Nancy Yaw Davis and the Dena'ina team; however, no locational details were recorded). In 1924, the Department of the Interior Bureau of Education built and maintained the Eklutna Industrial (Vocational) School. The fish camp site (ANC-01299) was constructed and used by the school to provide training in traditional fishing methods, while also providing fish for the school's subsistence (Yaw Davis 1994). By 1946 the buildings had been condemned and the school was permanently closed (Chandonnet 1979).

A recent floristic study of Fort Richardson was conducted by Livchar et al. (1997), with an appendix description of the Fort's ecological setting. The following description is from *Vegetation of Fort Richardson* (Lichvar et al. 1997):

"Fort Richardson falls within the Cook Inlet Lowlands Section of the Coastal Trough Humid Taiga Province of Bailey's Ecoregions of the United States (McNab and Avers 1994). Forests in the Anchorage area closely resemble the Boreal Forest of Interior Alaska, although some understory and tree species occur that are typically found in the Coastal Spruce-Hemlock Forest. Fort Richardson's forests have been described as open, low-growing spruce and closed spruce-hardwood forests by Viereck and Little (1972), and as a lowland spruce-hardwood forest by the Joint Federal-State Land Use Planning Commission (1973). Packee (as quoted in Livchar et al. 1997), in examining Alaska's forest vegetation zones, characterizes the region as an area where white spruce *(Picea glauca)* and Sitka spruce (*Picea sitchensis*) naturally hybridize; balsam poplar (*Populus balsamifera*) and black cottonwood *(Populus trichocarpa)* intergrade; and mountain hemlock *(Tsuga mertensiana)* may form the subalpine forest. Vegetation reflects the transitional nature of the climate between maritime and continental. This maritime climatic influence has resulted in a lower incidence of natural fire than is found in the spruce-hardwood forests of interior Alaska (Gabriel and Tande 1983).

Upland sites on Fort Richardson are dominated by paper birch (*Betula paperifera*), white spruce, and, on drier sites, quaking aspen *(Populus tremuloides*). Cottonwood and poplar are common in areas bordering principal streams. Black spruce *(Picea mariana*) is the dominant tree in wetter areas and on some well-drained sites. Most bogs are treeless or support stands of stunted black spruce. Grasses, herbs, willows (*Salix* spp.), and alders (*Alnus* spp.) dominate the vegetation in a narrow band along the Inlet and at elevations above 1,500 feet on the Chugach Mountain slopes' (Livchar et al. 1997: appendix)."

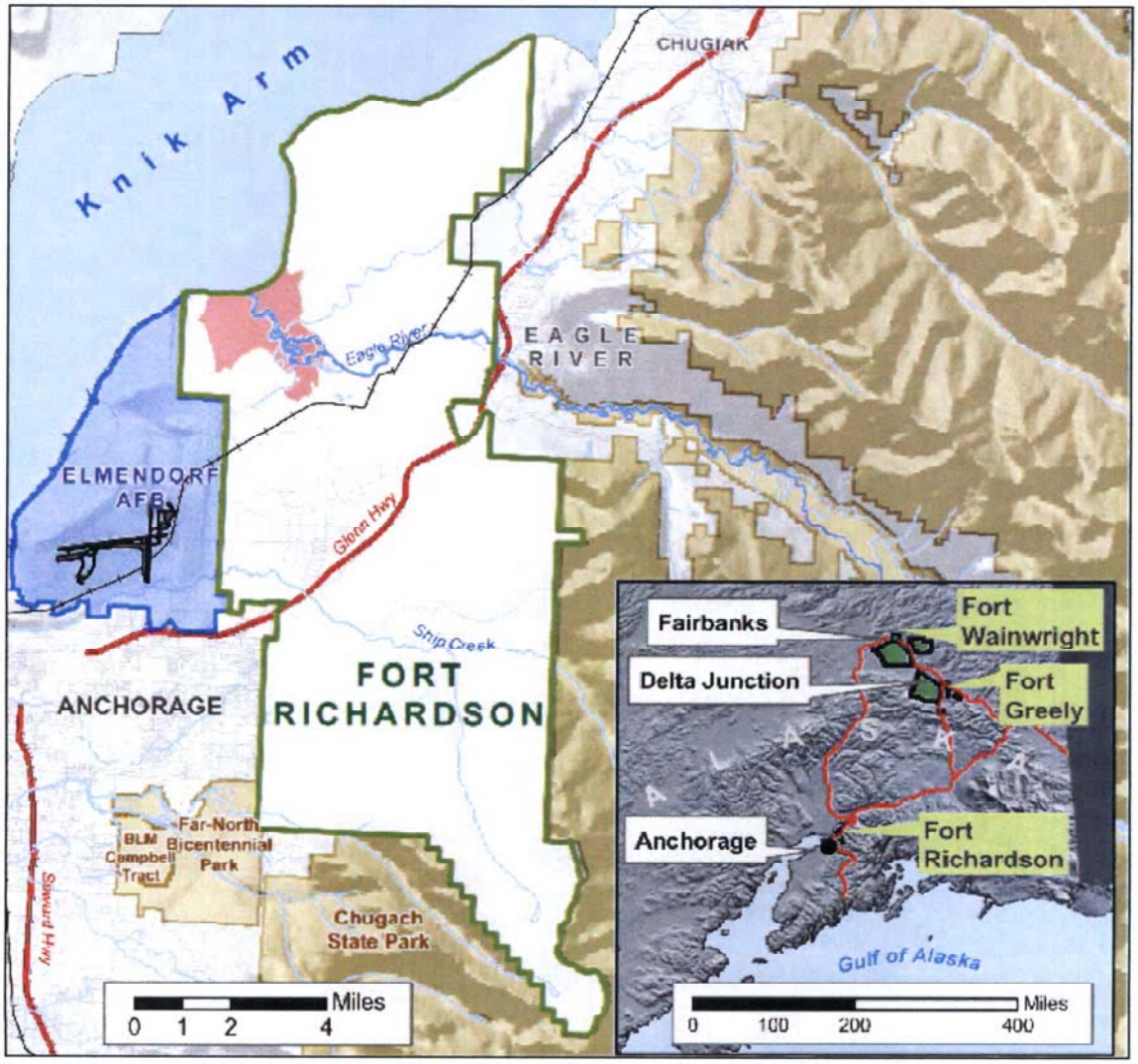

Figure 33. Location of Fort Richardson